

Moving the Needle

NO. 3 •



AU TRIP TO THE NORTH-WEST


AU meets with handicraft sector beneficiaries

CURES

AU launches medical research partnership in Sfax

PROMISE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Eleven Entrepreneurs complete an entrepreneurship tour in NYC and D.C



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The U.S. Embassy's Assistance Unit (AU) provides programming that responds to the needs of the Government of Tunisia to accelerate economic development and strengthen its' democracy. The AU works in coordination with other U.S. government agencies as well as the international community to target distinct and defined elements of Tunisian economic and governance reforms. The AU manages projects funded through Economic Support Bilateral Funds, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) local grants, and three MEPI leadership programs.



U.S. Embassy, Tunis

THANK YOU NOTE



On November 22, 2021 the Embassy's Assistance Unit (AU) held a workshop for its implementing partners to discuss current U.S. assistance programs, new mechanisms of collaboration, and future priorities to support the Tunisian people.

The resounding success of the AU's Implementing Partners workshop reflects the everlasting dedication and engagement of our partners. The AU team would like to reiterate its gratitude for the partners' time and valuable input during the workshop.

We witnessed a transformational gathering that allowed us to identify challenges, develop collaboration mechanisms, and pinpoint assistance priorities that respond to the current needs of the Tunisian people. This workshop was the first of many productive coordination discussions.

The United States is proud to share democratic values with Tunisia and the U.S. Embassy relies on you for innovative and creative ideas that help us properly tailor our future assistance programs to reinforce these values.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS

THE SAHA PROJECT CONVENES A ROUNDTABLE ON HEALTH GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES IN TUNISIA

On October 21, Ambassador Blome and the General Director of Health Abderrazak Bouzouita participated in a roundtable discussion with Tunisian experts on health governance in Tunisia. The roundtable was part of a \$5 million U.S. Embassy funded 'SAHA' project, in partnership with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and BEDR, to improve transparency and efficiency in the health and pharmaceutical sectors.

The event was an opportunity for key stakeholders to discuss challenges and potential solutions to healthcare governance in Tunisia. Participants addressed a variety of important topics such as management of healthcare facilities, governance in the pharmaceutical sector, and a patient-centered approach to health governance.

This roundtable marked the beginning of a series of events and activities under the SAHA project to help improve the governance and regulatory framework of the healthcare sector for Tunisia and its citizens.



"THE "SAHA" PROJECT IS AN EXAMPLE OF OUR SHARED INTEREST IN INCREASING TRANSPARENCY TO MORE EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE TUNISIAN PEOPLE."



U.S. Embassy, Tunis

"The U.S. Embassy is currently investing more than \$15 million to increase accountability and good governance in a range of activities, working with the Tunisian government and civil society organizations."
Ambassador Donald Blome



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



The United States Launches \$5 million Medical Research Partnership Between University of Sfax and Johns Hopkins University

On January 21, Ambassador Blome and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Moncef Boukthir launched the \$5 million U.S. funded Tunisian Health Center for University Excellence and Sustainability (CURES) project at the Sfax Medical School. This research and simulation project will make Sfax a center of medical excellence by offering doctors and researchers the technological innovation necessary to prevent and treat non-communicable diseases, such as cancer and diabetes.

Responding to a critical need within the Tunisian healthcare system, this three-year project builds partnerships between the University of Sfax and U.S. academic research centers to facilitate the exchange of innovation and research. The project will also enable the University of Sfax to establish links with the private sector to promote and commercialize locally-developed health technologies. In a ceremony attended by the project's main partner, John Hopkins University, implementing partner FHI360 signed a memoranda of understanding with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the University of Sfax.



***“This project exemplifies the U.S Embassy’s ongoing commitment to research and innovation to empower Tunisia’s health sector.”
Ambassador Donald Blome***



Tunisian Start-up Delegation Successfully Completes a Tour in the United States

U.S. Embassy Deputy chief of Mission (DCM) Natasha Franceschi met with 11 young Tunisian entrepreneurs from across Tunisia who shared their experiences on their recent visit to the United States where they met with prominent U.S. investors and entrepreneurs.

During a 10-day exchange program in New York City and Washington D.C., the entrepreneurs gained firsthand exposure to each city's entrepreneurial community, meeting with American and Tunisian venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, and other experts. Participants also met with the Tunisian Ambassador to the United States Tajouri Bessassi to discuss ways to strengthen private sector opportunities in Tunisia. During the trip, participants pitched project ideas in front of a panel of representatives from Google, the World Bank, and Village Capital.

The exchange program is part of the PROMISE project, a \$2million initiative funded by the U.S. Embassy to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Tunisia by enabling start-ups to attract international investors, protect their intellectual property, and obtain the prestigious start-up up label.





U.S. Embassy Tunis Assistance Unit

BUILDING INNOVATION
AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

"Young entrepreneurs are key to Tunisia's economic future. I was inspired to hear from Tunisia's talented entrepreneurs about their experiences in the United States. We are proud to sponsor projects like PROMISE which contribute to Tunisia's economic prosperity and business growth," said U.S. DCM Natasha Franceschi.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

U.S. EMBASSY AND MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS LAUNCH A JOINT WORKING GROUP ON E-COMMERCE



The U.S. Embassy and the Ministry of Women Affairs launched a joint working group on October 21 to strengthen women's participation in the Tunisian economy, focusing on e-commerce. The working group, which includes representatives from the government, the private sector and international experts, will develop actions to improve the e-commerce legal framework to incentivize Tunisian women participation in e-commerce.

Creating jobs and supporting entrepreneurs, particularly among youth and women, are priorities for U.S. assistance in Tunisia.

NEWS IN BRIEF



ACEA LAUNCHES ECO-TOURISM PILOT CIRCUIT TO EMPOWER WOMEN ARTISANS

To highlight the diversity and richness of the Wiki PAM essential oil products and further empower the women who make them, the ACEA project launched its first integrated eco-tourism pilot circuit, in Ain Draham, one of the most beautiful regions in Tunisia.

The initiative aims to help Tunisians better discover their own country, while creating a larger market for local artisans working in less visited rural parts of the country. The initiative also helps the artisans grow their networks and develop new collaborations.



U.S. EMBASSY AND EFE-TUNISIA LAUNCH A TECHNOLOGICAL INCUBATOR IN MEDENINE

On February 3, Education for Employment (EFE) Tunisia virtually launched the U.S. funded StarTech technological incubator in the governorate of Medenine. This incubator empowers youth to create startups and spurs economic growth in key sectors such as Agritech, renewable energy, and e-commerce.

This activity provides a six-month incubation program to a cohort of 10 start-ups, including a one-month pre-incubation phase and a 5-month incubation program that includes coaching, mentoring, and capacity building sessions. The program also helps the new businesses enroll in the national Start-up Act label process. Moreover, the incubator connects its beneficiaries to additional technical support and funding opportunities.

NEWS IN BRIEF

ACEA LAUNCHES A NEW CLUSTER FOR THE CARPET SECTOR IN THE GOVERNORATE OF GABES

With the participation of the Governor of Gabes Mongi Thamer and the AU team, the ACEA project held the first carpet sector cluster meeting in the municipality of Dkhilet Toujane.

The project relies on a participatory approach based on the development of a business cluster network that brings together stakeholders in the textile sector to improve the level of craftsmanship and build better business support structures.



FORTY-FIVE PHD HOLDERS SUCCESSFULLY GRADUATED FROM THE INNOVATION POST DOC PROGRAM

Forty-five PhD holders successfully graduated from the Innovation Post Doc program within the U.S. funded PROMISE Project. The Innovation Post Doc Program is a six-week immersive program that matches PhD talents to employment opportunities through a targeted set of training, coaching, and internships. All graduates found jobs, internships, or joined a digital program in partnership with Go My Code.





ASSISTANCE UNIT'S TRIP TO THE NORTHWEST

In an effort to better engage with the Collaborative Action for Handicrafts Exports (ACEA) artisans and monitor activities in the field, the AU team traveled to the Northwest region.

The AU team participated in the 9th «Wiki PAM» cluster meeting, which was held on November 9th in Tabarka. The meeting was an opportunity to assess the progress of the female artisan collectives and strengthen partnerships among aromatic and medicinal plant stakeholders on issues of common interest such as access to raw materials. The AU team reiterated the Embassy's commitment to collaborate with the Tunisian people to support artisans, create jobs, and improve the lives of hard-working entrepreneurs and their families throughout Tunisia.



FEATURES

On November 10, the AU and ACEA teams delivered the first batch of in-kind grants of more than 60,000 Tunisian Dinars (roughly \$20,000) to the women led “Kounouz Chamel,” “Al Baraka,” and “Pure Nature” cooperatives from the governorate of Jendouba. The delivery included oil distillation equipment, in order to respond to artisans’ technical needs and enable the cooperatives to increase their productivity with modernized work tools.

The \$5.6 million ACEA project supports Tunisian artisans, particularly rural women, to improve their technical capacities, sell their products domestically, and access new international markets. Due in large part to AU programming, the United States is now the leading destination for Tunisian handicrafts. In the past ten years, exports to the U.S. have increased dramatically: from less than 1 million Tunisian Dinar (TND) in 2011 to more than 25.8 million TND in 2020.



ENTREPRENEUR PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Leyth Ben Jeddou is a 2019 Student Leaders program alum and a 23-year-old entrepreneur who continuously demonstrates passion, commitment, and creativity in his endeavors. He launched his career by working in strategic marketing for three years before successfully co-founding three start-ups, two of which are social start-ups.

Leyth established Makhla, a social start-up that specializes in sustainable fashion and produces a handmade backpack that is crafted by southern artisans using dried palm fronds from a Tunisian oasis.

Fostering a sense of modern fashion and authentic style, Makhla, creates jobs for seasonal artisans and helps reduce palm waste that is damaging the local ecosystem. Additionally, Leyth is the Business Development Director at BOUBLI, a digital media company that strives to empower young people, especially the most marginalized, to challenge dominant media narratives and stereotypical representations of youth through innovative content and targeted training for youth.



"My goal is to become a social entrepreneur, help lead my country towards an environmentally conscious future, and solve national and global socioeconomic issues," said Leyth



NORTH AFRICAN REGION'S YOUTH AMBASSADOR FOR PEACE FOR THE AFRICAN UNION

After participating in the MEPI Student Leaders Program in 2017, Khouloud Ben Mansour had the opportunity to take part in several other programs and participate in trainings and conferences at an international level.

The African Union appointed Khouloud as the North African Region's Youth Ambassador for Peace. As the only Tunisian and representative from North Africa, Khouloud is committed to making her two-year position positive and impactful. With the help of the African Union, Khouloud developed a work plan that started in February 2022. In collaboration with four other ambassadors, she is combatting hate speech and promoting peace.

Khouloud is proud to represent Tunisia on a global level to reflect a positive image of Tunisian youth and female leaders. The U.S. Embassy will keep supporting this prominent leader and keep you updated on her achievements.

"I BELIEVE THAT THE MEPI STUDENT LEADERS PROGRAM HAS OFFERED ME SO MANY ADVANTAGES AND KNOWLEDGE IN A WAY THAT SHAPED MY SKILLS TO BE READY FOR THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD," KHOULOU TOLD US. "I OWE MY PROGRESS TO THE ACADEMIC MENTORSHIP I RECEIVED AND THE GREAT CONTACTS I MADE IN THE UNITED STATES. I CAN FAIRLY SAY, I AM A PROUD ALUMNA OF THIS AMAZING EXCHANGE PROGRAM."



LDF ALUMNA FIERCELY ADVOCATES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Amira Marzouk is a Leaders for Democracy Fellow (LDF) and an International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) alumna. Amira is a former member of Tunisia's parliament and the Pan African Parliament, where she was the only Tunisian woman representative from 2012 to 2014. Amira was also a member of an observation election mission in different African countries, and she served as an Ambassador of the World Forum of Women Parliamentarians. She is a proven leader and an advocate to pass legislation that empowers women and promotes equality.

Amira is currently leading the "Center Democracy for All" to implement the MEPI funded "Support and Accelerate Women Inclusion (SAWI) project in partnership with the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership for Women at the American University of Beirut. Through the SAWI project, Amira and her team (including two other MEPI alumni) established 10 partnerships with Tunisian institutions from the banking, higher education, healthcare, and STEM sectors.

SAWI works with corporate human resources departments to promote concrete action plans for responsible inclusion of women in the workplace. It is creating a network of Tunisian employers who advocate for inclusive policies to improve women's economic participation. As the SAWI project continues to progress, Amira is confident that the collaboration with the partnering institutions represents a positive step towards empowering and supporting an inclusive Tunisian economy.





AN ARDENT ADVOCATE FOR YOUTH AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Ahmed Missaoui is a social and political activist who participated in the U.S. Embassy's Leaders for Democracy Fellowship (LDF) and International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). Ahmed is currently a municipal councilor in Sfax and president of the district of Sidi Mansour.



Ahmed has worked on several youth engagement initiatives, such as the BuildUp Tunisia project, which built the capacity of young entrepreneurs, and the Tunisia Accountability and Political Participation project, which improved young people's involvement in the Tunisian elections. Both projects were part of the MEPI local grants program. The embassy admires his active participation and involvement with MEPI local grants following his participation in the MEPI LDF exchange program. Ahmed shared: "I feel my mission in this world is to be active socially, act as an example to younger generations and always keep trying to restore young Tunisians' faith in public service."

After winning the 2018 municipal elections in Sfax, Ahmed contributed actively to the development of his local community and currently plays a major role in the realization of community projects in Sfax. During the COVID 19 pandemic, he has used his leadership skills to gather civil society and other stakeholders to create a donation center to help the most vulnerable people. Ahmed's involvement with U.S. Embassy programs continues as he recently participated in MEPI's Arab American Institute Foundation Peers exchange program, which connects elected officials in Sfax with those in Philadelphia, PA. Through this program, he gained support for the LINATACHAREK project, which created an Internet radio station to strengthen citizen communication with their municipal leaders.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

